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NORTH COUNTY LIFE

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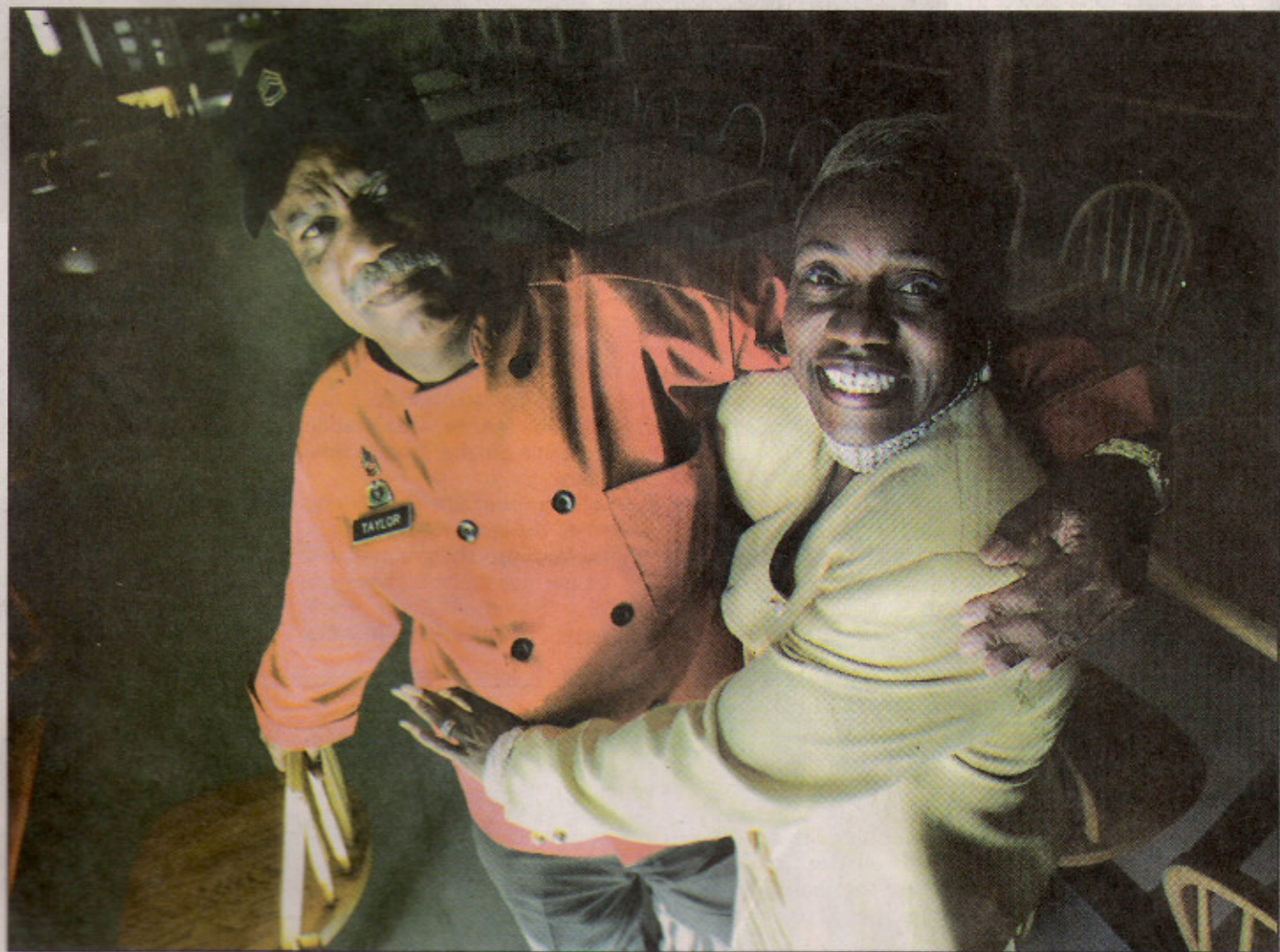
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THE TRIBUNE

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One Paso couple's story of love at Camp Roberts



TRIBUNE PHOTO BY JOE JOHNSTON

Mardell Taylor pursued his future wife, Lois, when he was a cook in the Camp Roberts kitchen and she was a medical supplier for the troop clinic. They plan to spend the rest of their lives in Paso Robles, where it's 'like a big family,' Lois says.

Mardell and Lois Taylor met 14 years ago when they both worked at Camp Roberts

By NICK WILSON
THE TRIBUNE

They met in the Camp Roberts dining facility. She thought he was a smooth talker and initially resisted his advances, telling him she didn't need any help making toast or tea.

But 14 years later, Mardell and Lois Taylor are happily married and plan to live the rest of their lives in Paso Robles.

"I didn't like Mardell at first," she said. "I thought he was some kind of player. The other female soldiers would talk about him and say, 'Oh, Sgt. Taylor is so cute.' I wasn't going there. I didn't want any games."

As a National Guardsman, Mardell Taylor started working as a cook in the kitchen at Camp Roberts in 1989.

Lois Taylor went to the cafeteria every day at Camp

Roberts in the early 1990s when she worked as a medical supplier for the troop clinic.

They eventually became friends, and after about a year they started dating.

"He said he wanted to buy me a present because he hadn't bought a present for a woman in six years," said Lois Taylor, 54. "I said, 'OK, I don't mind.'"

He bought her a \$100 bottle of perfume and lotion, Red by Giorgio. They laughed over the tiny bag they were given to carry it out of the store.

They dated for several years before deciding to get married seven years ago.

He is now the director of the dining facility at Camp Roberts. She is a licensed psychiatric technician and nurse of 23 years who works at Salinas Valley State Prison.

On Friday — the day of their seventh anniversary — he finished up in the kitchen after serving 230 Marines stationed on the base while she waited

for him in his office in a yellow dress.

"It's nice to have Lois, because this job takes a lot of time and she understands how it works," said Mardell Taylor, 59. "... I'm lucky to have her, or I'd be divorced by now."

He serves as many as 400 people at a time and 1,500 in a day, shuffling them in and out of the cafeteria every 15 minutes.

Mardell Taylor is a Vietnam

War veteran who supervises a staff of 12 or 13 employees. He said he strives to make every meal the best he possibly can because "the meal the soldiers have here may be the last good meal they have

in a long time."

At home, the Taylors playfully compete against each other to see who can make the best food. Some of their favorites are meats, salads, sweet potatoes and gumbo.

Lois Taylor, who is studying to be a chaplain, likes to joke, "I fill people with the word of God, and he fills people with

food."

She is a member of the North County Revival Center, a Pentecostal church, and he attends the Second Baptist Church.

From their first marriages, she has a grown daughter and he has four grown children. Their families gather at holidays.

Her goal is to open a halfway house in the North County, where she can help young men and women make the transition from correctional institutions back into society.

He plans to keep working at Camp Roberts — a job he loves despite having to wake up at 2 a.m. — at least until age 62 and perhaps beyond.

"I love Paso Robles," Mardell Taylor said. "I like the small-town atmosphere. People here say 'hi' to each other on the street. It's like a big family."

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